

All Division 9 (Forest Policy and Economics) Meeting

38 - Impacts of voluntary forest management certification: challenges and solutions in measuring results

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KG I - 1228 (Uni Freiburg)

IUFRO17-2656 **Monitoring and evaluating effects and impacts for FSC Forest management certification**

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**Abstract:** Introducing Session 38 of the congress, the paper will discuss the FSC Monitoring and Evaluation scheme and the requirements of the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems. It will address the methodological challenges for impact assessment, e.g. in discussing whether certification can be regarded as intervention in forest management; in identifying appropriate counterfactuals; in attributing characteristics of the forest management to certification requirements; in finding a balance between environmental, social and economic reduced negative and achieved positive effects of forest management; and in generalizing findings in individual certified operations. Methods like the analysis of Corrective Action Requests from public certification reports and meta-analysis of independent researchers' papers, as well as the FSC Theory of Change and impact indicators, will be presented. The paper will also explain the concept of the multidisciplinary Value and Impact Analysis (VIA) Initiative, and summarize the recommendations emerging from this initiative to support FSC - and other ISEAL members - in making adequate, business-ready claims. This will be followed by a call for further systematic, meaningful research.

certification, impacts, evaluation, methodologies

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IUFRO17-1239 **Influences of the FSC certification process on forest governance in the Congo basin**

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**Abstract:** The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro had two ambivalent consequences for tropical forests. On the one hand, it contributed to promote new forest policies that were inspired by the paradigm of sustainable forest management. On the other hand, given the lack of consensus to establish an international treaty on forests, it prompted environmental NGOs to develop private systems of forest certification, like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). For 25 years, these two dynamics have been interacting at the international and national levels, while most assessments of the impacts of forest certification are done at the local level, and especially in and around logging concessions, at least in the Congo Basin. By contrast, this paper analyzes the influences of the debate and the implementation of the FSC standards on changes in forest governance at the national level for 15 years in Cameroon, Congo and Gabon.

Forest governance has not changed either regularly or identically in the three countries. However, a few observations are similar: in the 3 countries, the implementation of forest management plan remains unsatisfactory and the fight against corruption has not been effective. Conversely, the respondents indicate progress on the participation of stakeholders in the elaboration/implementation of public policy, better traceability of products and greater consideration for high conservation value ecosystems.

According to these interviewees, FSC certification has had a mixed influence on forest governance at the national level for the past 15 years. Overall, many elements of forest governance have experienced only marginal or no influence from the discussions and the implementation of FSC certification in the Congo Basin. We describe the historical reasons for this low impact and detail how FSC succeed in influencing a few key aspects of sustainable forest management.

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IUFRO17-3683 **A simple and effective methodology to show FSC impact on conservation**

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**Abstract:** For a certification scheme relying on stakeholder engagement it is crucial to show impact of certification interventions on conservation to attract NGOs as well as forest managers. Our method is based on a literature study where the conservation considerations of the national FSC standard are compared with legislation. The differences are quantified and the contribution of certification to conservation is analyzed using scientific literature. From impact studies in Sweden, Finland, Latvia and Estonia we can draw some conclusions. Firstly, the FSC-requirements that stand out as contributors to conservation are either unique for FSC, i.e. not mentioned in the national legislation, or where FSC requires a much higher level. Secondly, certification can also have target oriented requirements, while legislation is more about strict protection or considerations taken at harvesting. Thirdly, some requirements are difficult to attribute to certification interventions because they are hard to quantify or research is lacking. Finally, law enforcement, respectively recommendations that have been turned into hard requirements, were identified as important contributions of certification. Setting up national reference groups to review the analysis has proved crucial for securing the national relevance of the study. Such comparative studies give a sound overview of the certification impact with a rather low investment, and it can easily be repeated in any country with FSC certification.

FSC, forest certification, impact, conservation

# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Congress 2017



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